
*Speech delivered by H.E. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta, at the
2nd Malta-Albania Business Forum, Gozo Plenary Session, 22 May 2018*

Your Excellency, President Meta;
Honourable Dr Chris Cardona, Minister for the Economy, Investment, and Small Business;
Honourable Dr Justyne Caruana, Minister for Gozo;
Distinguished guests;
Dear friends.

Your Excellency, President Meta, it is my pleasure to welcome you and your business delegation to the beautiful island of Gozo.

As Malta's "sister island", Gozo is internationally renowned for its natural and historical beauty.

We have come to Gozo because we are convinced that both our business communities will find relevant counterparts, to explore possibilities of potential collaboration and partnership.

These can take place in diverse areas of interest, including financial services, construction, healthcare, education and training, transshipment and logistics, tourism, hospitality, and the teaching of English as a foreign language, amongst others.

The tourism and hospitality industries, which are very well-developed in both Malta and Gozo, provide an ideal gateway for mutual economic expansion and social development.

In fact, tourism is not only an economic operation. Most importantly, we must see it as an opportunity for person-to-person connections and friendship-building between our two peoples.

For this reason, the interactions we are facilitating today, between Gozitan and Albanian entrepreneurs and business people, is a clear indication of the importance that both of our countries are placing, to develop our excellent diplomatic and political relations into tangible connections for business.

In this way, we shall be enhancing the friendship that already exists between us.

I believe that it is essential for our collaborations to include the participation of not only the larger enterprises, but also between our small and medium sized businesses.

I am pleased to note that, through the good offices of the Ministry for Gozo, the business community has a direct link to all other ministries in Malta.

The Ministry is a focal point of reference and a facilitating catalyst, for all issues affecting the island, in order to ensure that Gozo keeps its identity and develops relevant business models, to promote innovation and generate socio-economic success.

In this context, I would like to commend the energy and leadership of Minister Justyne Caruana.

As you all know, these are exciting times for the Maltese Islands.

Let me therefore take this opportunity to remind you, that the economy in the Maltese Islands is experiencing unprecedented growth, creating an ideal environment in which our businesses can develop and thrive.

For this reason, let me commend Minister Cardona for his tireless endeavours, to nurture a business-friendly environment, in which our businesses can grow and be successful.

I also believe that this is a crucial and exciting time for Albania, as one can see Albania's drive, to open its economy further, and to encourage its businesses to expand in a sustainable manner.

Gozo has its own particular characteristics, and has great potential for more business to develop.

Indeed, the business communities of the Maltese Islands are at a stage whereby, due to our impressive economic growth, they are now seeking new opportunities and avenues for expansion.

The Maltese Islands are also an ideal avenue for Albanian investment, due to our position within the European Union and the Commonwealth of Nations, providing access to enormous markets all across the world.

The geo-strategic potential of our respective countries is immense, due to the presence of the Maltese Islands in the Mediterranean Region, and the position of Albania, which makes it a competitive gateway to the Balkan Region.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to urge everybody to work together, to build upon what we have achieved so far, and to pursue strategies for innovation and collaboration.

I augur that the endeavours of our business communities will keep going from strength-to-strength, in order to ensure inclusive prosperity and holistic wellbeing, in the best interests of our peoples and our nations.

Thank you for your attention.